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**AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF A SPY**

By Mary Bancroft.
Illustrated. 300 pp. New York:
William Morrow & Co. \$15.95.

By BARBARA SHULGASSER

For years Mary Bancroft tried to be a model housewife, but finally she surrendered to her intrepid nature and became a spy. Her matter-of-fact story, "Autobiography of a Spy," has the doubtful virtue of beginning at the beginning, and not before midvolume does she dislodge the narrative from tepid tales of a Cambridge, Mass., childhood, a dull sojourn at a sugar mill in Cuba with her first husband and life with a second husband in Switzerland, his homeland, where her World War II work for the Office of Strategic Services finally began.

Only then comes her affair with Allen Dulles, who headed O.S.S. operations in Switzerland, and her friendship with Carl Gustav Jung, who cured her of sneezing fits. She says that Dulles decided almost immediately on meeting her that she would work for him and become his lover. The sudden onset of strong feeling is a prevailing tendency in this memoir. On first encountering her second husband on shipboard, Miss Bancroft was instantly taken with "his worldliness, his facility with languages, and his extensive knowledge of gourmet food and wines."

Though the characterizations are not memorably drawn, "Au-

tobiography of a Spy" does have historical value. As a liaison between the German resistance and United States intelligence, Miss Bancroft learned the details of the unsuccessful assassination attempt against Adolf Hitler. The story gains momentum here, but even her spying has a plodding air.

Perhaps the daring agents of fiction have spoiled us for the drudgery of real-world espionage, but Miss Bancroft made a particularly domestic sort of spy; she worked out of her house. The work included helping Dulles prepare his nightly telephone reports to the United States on wires tapped by enemy eavesdroppers and making contact with journalists and others sympathetic to the Allied cause. After a night's work, she and Dulles routinely engaged in "a bit of dalliance." In real spying, evidently, duty comes before romance.